

and its purpose to continue the gay spirit that had possessed them all day.

WITH a different setting on the terrace where the coffee was served, the warm August night promised a change of temper. It was the drowsy hour of poetry and sensibility, and the hush of contentment was over land and sea. Brooks drew their lounging chairs to the edge of the steps, where they could look down along the lawn and drink the perfumed moisture of the soft air, which caught a hundred subtle fragrances from thicket, bush, and garden bed as it floated gently up to them from the water below. There were low hanging clouds over the sea; but overhead stars were spread like flames across the wide meadows of the firmament, and tiny patches of clouds browsed lazily in the heavenly pasturage. It was on such a night as this that they had met here before, and the memory of it came to them both in the same moment. Each seemed to know what the other was thinking.

"Are you sorry?" she asked.  
 "I looked up at her quickly. 'God knows I am' contritely. 'Surely you must know me—'  
 "St!" softly. "I do."  
 He would have said more; but she would not let him speak.  
 "Have you had a happy day?" she inquired.  
 "There's hardly need to answer that," he murmured. "I suppose if I told you how happy you wouldn't believe me."  
 She noticed the soft note in his voice, and while she did not find it unpleasant, it warned her of the danger of the night.  
 "It's a pity you couldn't have Abby," she said mischievously.  
 His look of reproach was almost pitiful. "I had hoped you wouldn't say that."  
 "Why?" she laughed.  
 "Because it's meaningless—because I am entitled to her as she is to me."  
 "You surprise me," she said suavely. "I thought—" then stopped and laughed suddenly. "But then, of course, I can only judge by appearances. The last time I saw you together, for instance—"  
 "Stop, please!" He sat up and faced her, his voice more the less insistent for being quiet, and she could not disregard the quiet note of command. "I've wanted to write you about that; but I didn't know how to say it. Perhaps you may understand now if I tell you—"  
 "Is it necessary?"  
 "Yes. In justice to her. Abby doesn't

care a rap for me. She took pity on me and played the Good Samaritan. I was grateful to her; I still am. That night," he hesitated, "that night I think I had had too much to drink. She led me a chase, I caught her, and—and you saw the rest."  
 "Yes," she said coldly, "I saw. You seem to have talent for that sort of thing."  
 Her sneer stung. "I know I deserve it, and so I can't complain. You must think what you choose of me."

He stopped suddenly. There seemed to be nothing more to say. He sank back in his chair somberly and fixed his gaze on the distant trees. A silence followed, a long and bitter silence, during which a hundred thoughts banished for the day recurred with all their old ugliness to Garriott's mind. How could he have forgotten? The light went out of the stars like the light of her eyes which she hid from him. A damp wind was blowing in from the east, and there was a hint of lightning low on the horizon. The brightness of their day was to end in storm. It didn't seem to matter much one way or the other; but his conscience cleared as he thought that for Abby's sake he had lied, lied like a gentleman.

He did not know that through the fingers with which Natalie screened her brow she was watching him intently; trying to read how much of what he said was true, how much false.

She pulled her wrap more closely about her shoulders and leaned forward, and as the warm glow from the lights of the drawing room played on her face he could see that she was smiling.

"I don't know what you deserve," she said slowly; "but I think there are some things it is just as well for us to forget. Suppose in spite of all I choose to think well of you?"

"Can you?"  
 "I'll try. It seems such a pity not to be friends. Besides—well, there's René, you know."

"Oh, yes," he said savagely. "I hadn't forgotten!" He rose, walked to the balustrade, knocked his pipe out on the railing, then took two or three turns up and down. When he stopped before her, his voice was as calm as her own. "Come—don't you think we'd better be going in? There's a rain-drop."

In a moment she rose with a sigh. "I suppose, if the skies were always fair, sunlight would cease to be attractive."

To be continued next Sunday

## Afterward

Continued from page 5

and inconsiderate disregard of wrinkles and kindred evils, had not had the audacity to gaze here even a fleeting instant.

Betty beamed. Philip had risen to the occasion just as she had known he would. For though she protest with mighty pronunciation and swear by thousand oaths to the contrary, to be honest after the lapse of years in the eyes of an old-time swain, fills the soul of a mere woman with satisfaction little short of divine. And Betty was mere woman to the core.

"You have forgiven me, haven't you, Phil?" she asked matter abruptly, with a coaxing, rising inflection.

"Forgiven?" He had decided for an instant. "Why, yes," he said slowly. "I sometimes think you've showed an amount of good sense and worldly wisdom rarely found in one so young."

Betty glanced at him sharply, in vain endeavoring to ascertain just what his words implied.

"I fancy I should have been a monotonous sort of fellow to have ground day in and day out. Now, my rival, the Senator—" he laughed shortly. "The radiance died out of Betty's face."

"By the by, pardon my forgetfulness," Philip went on in a tone of mock apology.

"How is the Senator?" with a wave of his hand toward the picture hanging above the fireplace.

"The Senator? Haven't you heard?" faltered Betty.

"Heard?" he echoed.

"Yes," and Betty bit her lip nervously.

"No, I—I beg your pardon," he stammered. "I—you know I have heard nothing about any of you for years. Is he—" he broke off suddenly, and glanced quickly at her dress.

"He is dead," said Betty quietly. "He died a month ago. He suffered horribly at the last," and she shuddered slightly.

NEITHER spoke immediately. The whole atmosphere had changed.

"Was he good to you, Betty?" he asked suddenly.

"Sometimes."  
 "The—" he clenched his fists and choked back the epithet.

"And sometimes—I may as well tell you, Phil—it seemed to me that I could not endure another hour of it. You say I look young," she said bitterly, "I have had sorrow enough and trouble enough to quench every spark of youth in me. He—oh, well, it was one long, horrible nightmare, except just toward the last. He softened some then. I realized that perhaps, before he had grown cold and cruel and purse proud, there might have been an element of tenderness in his makeup. He always showered money upon me. He wanted me to be the best dressed woman in town, to have the best jewels, the best motors, the smartest entertainments. I was his property; therefore I must be held up as something for men to admire and for women to envy. He hated the things I loved, and loved the things I hated. I feel such a hypocrite, Philip, in these black clothes! Sometimes within the last month, when stinging, lashing memories have come over me with a rush, I have felt like tearing these lying garments to shreds, decking myself in flaming scarlet, and going out and saying to the world, 'This is how I grieve! Look at me! Here is an honest woman!' Then I have thought of him in his last illness, his poor thin hands, his pitiful, weak voice, his pain racked body, and somehow—" her voice trembled.

"I know, Betty," said Philip understandingly, and he half smiled as he thought of the girl who could break a man's heart without a quail, and yet be capable of all sacrifice and all tenderness in the presence of physical suffering.

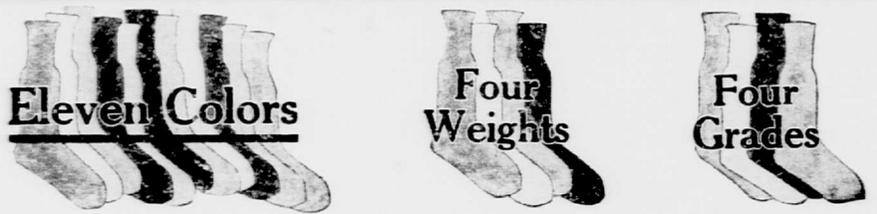
"But that's all over and done with now, and can never return," said Betty, forcing herself to smile.

"Thank God!" murmured Philip.

"And I'm going to begin life all over again. And in the first place, Phil, you and I are going to be friends."

"I have always been your friend," said Philip rather gravely.

"Yes; but we're going to be better



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